

# The Cowrie Creek Chronicle

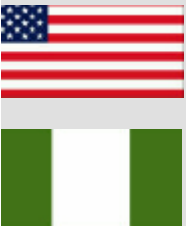
Published by the Consular Section

Volume 2, Issue 6 (July-August 2006)



## HIGHLIGHTS

Page 1: US Mission News  
Page 2: Africa Regional News  
Page 3: US Citizen Services  
Page 4: Immigrant Visas  
Page 5: Nonimmigrant Visas  
Page 6: The Editor's Page



## Contact Information For US Citizens in Nigeria:

### Abuja

US Embassy  
Plot 1075 , Diplomatic Drive  
Central District Area  
Abuja, Nigeria  
Telephone: 234.9.461.4000  
Fax: 234.9.461.4036  
E-Mail: [Consularabuja@state.gov](mailto:Consularabuja@state.gov)

### Lagos

US Consulate-General  
2 Walter Carrington Crescent  
Victoria Island  
Lagos, Nigeria  
Telephone: 234.1.261.0050  
Fax: 234.1.261.2218  
E-mail: [lagoscons2@state.gov](mailto:lagoscons2@state.gov)



Consul General. Brian Browne and UBA Chief Executive Officer and Group Managing Director, Mr. Tony Elumelu sign the contract agreement on Thursday, June 29, 2006  
Photo credits: Kester Abudu

## Consular News You Can Use

### **UBA new visa fee parter**

The formal execution of the US Consulate-General's new visa fee collection agreement between the US Mission to Nigeria and United Bank for Africa Plc took place Thursday June 29, 2006 in Lagos. The event featured a signing of the document by the Consul General, Mr. Brian Browne and UBA Chief Executive Officer and Group Managing Director, Mr. Tony Elumelu.

The agreement will enable UBA to deliver fee collection and retail banking services to the US Mission and its clients. It will bring simplicity, speed and convenience to the payment process for non-immigrant visa applicants and other clients of the US Mission. Effective June 29, UBA began collecting the N14,000 non-immigrant visa fee from visa applicants at designated UBA branches. After paying the fee, applicants are given a receipt that will serve as evidence of payment when the applicants come for their interviews.

### **Abuja begins issuing non-immigrant visas**

Meanwhile, the US Embassy's Consular Section in Abuja begins issuing non-immigrant visas effective mid-September 2006.



Ambassador Andrew Young giving his remarks while Chargé Thomas Furey looks on

## **US Chargé d'Affaires Thomas P. Furey Hosts a Reception for US Delegation to Leon H. Sullivan Summit VII in Abuja**

The US delegation to the Leon H. Sullivan VII summit arrived in Abuja on July 16, 2006 and were received by Thomas P. Furey, US Embassy Abuja's Chargé d'Affaires, who hosted them at a reception at the Ambassador's residence. The summit was held in Abuja July 17- 20. President George W. Bush was represented at the summit by US Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso Jackson.

Participants at the summit, which had as its theme "**Africa: A Continent of Opportunities - Building Partnership for Success,**" included Ambassador Andrew Young, former US Ambassador to the UN; Ambassador Howard Jeter, former US Ambassador to Nigeria; John A. Simon, Executive Vice President of the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation; the Reverend Herbert H. Lusk II, founder and President of Stand for Africa; and Anita Smith, President, Children's AIDS Fund.

The Sullivan Summits are named for the late Rev. Leon Sullivan (1922-2001), an African American social activist who guided efforts by which US corporations in apartheid-era South Africa adopted non-discriminatory hiring and employment policies.



### US Government Supports ECOWAS Regional Avian Flu Meeting

The US Embassy in Abuja lauded the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) secretariat and its member states for a meeting of political and technical staff to work out regional strategies to control and prevent Avian Flu in the West Africa region. This meeting took place in Abuja at the ECOWAS secretariat June 20 - 23, 2006.

The US Government (USG), through the United States Agency for International Development, assisted ECOWAS in financing the technical portion of the meeting.

The avian influenza virus (H5N1) is now well established in the West Africa region. Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon have all reported outbreaks. It is reasonable to assume that the community of West African States is at high risk such that urgent response measures are needed. Although still only an occupational disease for poultry farmers and handlers, the concern that the virus could easily mutate to a human epidemic is well supported by historical experience. The virus can wipe out entire bird populations in hours.

A USG statement described it as "reassuring" to note that the leaders of this region are giving this problem the level of attention it needs and expressed the hope that effective preventive strategies at local, national and regional levels will be discussed and put in place to protect both poultry assets in the region and human health.

The four-day meeting will provide a forum for West African government ministers and their staff plus regional and international organizations to review and update the regional strategy to control avian influenza in West Africa.



Insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs) such as this one in Senegal are one of the most effective ways to prevent malaria.

### Anti-Malaria Campaign in Africa on Track to Save Lives

A coalition of international partners is on track to distribute 18 million insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs) in Africa in 2006, an anti-disease effort that could save hundreds of thousands of lives from the often fatal malady transmitted by mosquitoes. Roll Back Malaria (RBM) is a coalition formed in 1998 by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the UN Development Programme, and the World Bank. It receives support from President George W. Bush's Anti-Malaria Initiative.

More than 18 million ITNs are being distributed for free in 2006, with a campaign in Kenya handing out 1.7 million nets alone in July, according to an RBM press release. Another 1.7 million ITNs will be distributed in August. At the same time, the campaign is aiming to reach more than 5 million children under age 5 with measles vaccinations. ITNs are considered one of the most effective ways to prevent malaria, caused by four species of *Plasmodium protozoa*, which are transmitted to humans through mosquito bites, mainly between dusk and dawn.

Malaria causes almost 1 million deaths worldwide per year, with the vast number of those deaths occurring among children in Africa. The incidence of malaria worldwide is about 300 million cases each year with about 90 percent of those cases occurring in countries of tropical Africa. Angola, Ethiopia and Rwanda have joined Kenya in implementing integrated campaigns. The RBM says several countries are expected to launch similar integrated initiatives, including Rwanda, Uganda, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

### United States Still Pursuing Peace in Darfur

The United States continues to "push hard" to bring relief to the people in the Darfur region of western Sudan, where at least 200,000 people have died and more than 2 million have been displaced since 2003, US Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton said July 27, 2006 in Washington, DC.

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bolton cautioned that even though the United States does "see a way forward, in regard to Darfur, significant challenges remain."

Bolton was on Capitol Hill in regard to his "recess" appointment as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, which expires in January 2007 if the Senate does not confirm him before then. President Bush installed Bolton at the United Nations in August 2005, during a congressional recess.

The United States is working within the UN Security Council, Bolton told the lawmakers, to craft a robust resolution under Chapter VII of the UN Charter that will afford any UN force the capability and the mandate to defend itself and civilians in Darfur.

Russia and China continue to voice opposition to a Chapter VII mandate, he said, but he added that in May the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1679, designed to facilitate planning for the future deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation in the Darfur region.

"We believe this to be a viable precedent for upcoming Darfur resolutions," he told the lawmakers. Additionally, he said, "There is also the issue of the government of Sudan agreeing to a UN force in Darfur," adding "significant efforts are ongoing bilaterally and multilaterally to achieve this. "While this plays out, we continue to do our part toward determining force requirements and identifying troop-contributing countries."

## U.S. CITIZEN SERVICES

### Travel Registration Always a Good Idea

US citizens in Nigeria can access the Department of State's online travel registration service at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). For all without computer access, you may still register in person at the US Embassy in Abuja or the Consulate-General in Lagos. You will need to complete a registration form and present proof of US citizenship (such as the biographic data page of your US passport).

### **Coming Soon: Warden System Test**

As the Lagos Consular Section continues to deal with the annual high season demand for non-immigrant visas, plans are nevertheless underway for a nationwide test of our warden system. The warden system facilitates contact between the US Diplomatic Mission teams in Lagos and Abuja and US citizens residing in and/or visiting Nigeria. Maintenance and periodic testing of this system ensures reliable communication in the event of natural disasters, civic disturbances or other unexpected events that present risks to the welfare of US citizens. Stay tuned for more information from the American Citizen Services Unit on this important matter.

### **US Population Due to Hit 300 Million**

As the US marked its 230<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 4, 2006, the US Bureau of the Census announced that the nation's population will surpass 300 million sometime in October of this year. A summary of past census data provides some perspective:

Census Year	US Population
1900	76 million
1910	92 million
1920	106 million
1930	123 million
1940	132 million
1950	151 million
1960	179 million
1970	203 million
1980	226 million
1990	248 million
2000	281 million
2006 (October)	300 million

Source: US Bureau of the Census



### **Important Notice About the 2006 US Mid-Term Elections**

All American citizens are reminded that 2006 is an election year in the United States. Overseas citizens are eligible to participate in primary, run-off, and special elections that occur throughout the year, as well as the general elections in November. A calendar of election dates is available on the Internet at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/primarycal.html>. You are encouraged to register to vote and/or request absentee ballots as early in the year as possible to ensure that you will receive all ballots for which you are eligible.

The official US Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance is the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). It has a wealth of information about absentee voting, including the downloadable absentee ballot application (SF-76, Federal Post Card Application, or FPCA), state-specific instructions for completing the form, links to or contact numbers for state and local officials, and the downloadable emergency ballot.

Overseas Americans may contact Democrats Abroad, Republicans Abroad or other American citizens groups or organizations for absentee voting information, or for assistance in registering to vote or to request absentee ballots. Links to these groups may be found on the FVAP website at <http://www.fvap.gov/links/ocitlinks.html>.

Non-partisan information about candidates, their voting records, and their positions on issues is widely available and easy to obtain via the Internet. You may use the links appearing on the Federal Voting Assistance Assistance program website at <http://www.fvap.gov/links/otherlinks.html>, or you can choose to use one of the many popular search engines to locate articles and information. Additionally, voting assistance is available at the US Consulate General in Lagos. Again, we strongly encourage you to begin this process as soon as possible. Doing so ensures that you will still be able to vote in your state's primary and general elections.



### **US Commercial Service News**

The Foreign Commercial Service in Lagos announces the arrival of new Commercial Attaché Johnny E. Brown, who arrived several weeks ago to take over from his predecessor Joanna McInerney. Johnny will continue where Joanna left off as the work of FCS Lagos goes on.



### **US Foreign Agricultural Service News**

The Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) of the US Consulate in Lagos is the overseas arm in Nigeria of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). FAS Lagos, led by Agricultural Attaché Ali Abdi, has regional responsibilities for Nigeria and Ghana and offers a variety of services to agribusiness companies, and government & non-government entities involved in agricultural trade and development.

FAS works worldwide to improve foreign market access for US products, build new markets, improve the competitive position of US agriculture in the global marketplace, and provide food aid and technical assistance to foreign countries.

FAS has the primary responsibility for USDA's international activities—market development, trade agreements and negotiations, and the collection and analysis of statistics and market information. It also administers USDA's export credit guarantee and food aid programs, and helps increase income and food availability in developing nations by mobilizing expertise for agriculturally-led economic growth.

FAS also enhances US agriculture's competitiveness by providing linkages to global resources and organizations.



## IMMIGRANT VISAS



### USCIS Announces Policy Changes for Fiancé(e) Petitions

The US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced on June 13, 2006 that in order to comply with provisions of the International Marriage Brokers Regulation Act of 2005 (IMBRA), it will need to issue "Requests for Evidence" (RFE) for more than 10,000 Alien Fiancé(e) Petitions (Form I-129F) currently being held at USCIS Service Centers. USCIS will begin immediately issuing RFEs to affected petitioners using an RFE template that has been approved and cleared by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

All petitions filed on or after March 6, 2006 must be supplemented with additional information to satisfy the new evidentiary requirements established by IMBRA. To adjudicate the petitions in question as quickly and efficiently as possible, USCIS is issuing "Requests for Evidence" (RFEs) asking petitioners to provide additional information including data pertaining to a petitioner's criminal history (if any).

Details on the waiver process for those affected by the new limitation for filings of I-129Fs are also provided in the RFE. A new Form I-129F that incorporates these changes was scheduled for release later in June. In certain circumstances, USCIS may need to issue a second RFE to some petitioners later in the process if it is determined that other required information was not provided in the initial filing.

### Case Status Online

If you have an application receipt number for any type of immigration petition, you can check the status of your case online, at the USCIS website: [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). You can also find processing dates for applications and petitions



President George W. Bush presides at military swearing-in ceremony for new US citizens

### **President Bush In Attendance** **US Soldiers become US Citizens**

Excerpts from the president's remarks at the ceremony, held at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, July 24, 2006:

"In a few moments, these men will swear the oath to become citizens of the United States of America. As part of the ceremony they will promise to support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic. This isn't going to be the first time these men have made such a promise. They took a similar oath when they became soldiers of the United States Army. And their presence here bears witness that they kept their word so that others might be free.

"Through the generations, our nation has remained strong and free because men and women put on our uniform and defend this country, and defend our beliefs. The three men we honor today have brought honor to America. Like those who have come before, each of these men chose to protect our country because they love what America stands for. We are stronger and more dynamic when we welcome new citizens like these.

"More than 33,000 non-US citizens currently serve in our military. Isn't that interesting -- 33,000 people who weren't born here serve in our military. And just like everybody else who wears the uniform, they understand the stakes of what it means to serve in the United States military, particularly after



Presidential handshakes for new US citizens

(continued from Column 2)

September the 11th, 2001. After that date, I signed an executive order making foreign-born members of our military immediately eligible for US citizenship when they serve on active duty. It made sense to me. If somebody is willing to risk their life for our country, they ought to be full participants in our country."

### **Military Service and US Citizenship**

After September 11, 2001, President Bush Signed Executive Order 13269 making foreign-born members of our military eligible for immediate naturalization. Non-citizen members of the US military can receive immediate naturalization through active duty service during periods of military hostilities.

Section 329 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) allows non-citizens to receive immediate naturalization through their active duty service in the Armed Forces during periods of military hostilities, if the president designates by executive order that the armed services are or were engaged in armed conflict with a hostile foreign force.

Since September 11, 2001, more than 26,000 service men and women in the US and overseas have been naturalized. During 2005, more than 6,000 military service members were naturalized, including 1,006 service members naturalized overseas during ceremonies in Afghanistan, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Spain, the United Kingdom and in the Pacific aboard the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk.

## NONIMMIGRANT VISAS

**DESTINATION USA**  
Secure Borders. Open Doors.



*Continued from Page 1*

### New Offsite Payment Partner: UBA

Effective Monday, July 3, 2006 all non-immigrant visa applicants were required to visit one of the designated branches of UBA Plc to make their payment before their interview.

The US Mission and UBA are committed to making this change as easy as possible for all applicants. The new payment procedure will simplify the visa process and promises to further improve the quality of service provided.

In recent years, the US Mission has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in renovations and other improvements designed to support more comfortable and efficient processing of visa applicants.

### Abuja Consular Section to Start Processing Non-Immigrant Visas

The US Embassy Consular Section in Abuja will at last inaugurate Non-Immigrant Visa processing effective mid-September 2006. Visa applicants in Abuja are also required to pay visa application fees at UBA branches.

### REVIEW: Drop Box Guidelines

Non-immigrant visa applicants may renew business, tourist, student, exchange, crew, or temporary employment visas if the following conditions are met:

1. The visa to be renewed is a full-validity (24-month) multiple-entry visa **issued in Lagos**.
2. The visa is still valid or expired no more than 12 months ago.
3. The required application forms are filled out completely.

Full details are available at [www.abuja.usembassy.gov](http://www.abuja.usembassy.gov).



Chief Consul Alan Latimer and Consular Officer Amanda Lillis during the Press Briefing

### New Chief Consul Meets the Press

Recent media criticism of US Visa policy was addressed on Thursday July 20, 2006, when the new US Chief Consul in Lagos, Mr. Alan Latimer, accompanied by Consular Officer Amanda Lillis, briefed the Nigerian Press at the US Public Affairs Section on Lagos Island. The event was also covered by journalists in Abuja via a digital video hook-up.

Issues discussed included the Non-Immigrant Visa process, documentation, cultural sensitivities, and student visas. The Chief Consular Officer said physical conditions and such variables as tribe, religion or race do not determine the eligibility or ineligibility of a visa applicant.

"As long as the necessary conditions including Airline boarding regulations are met, the embassy does not deny visas to pregnant mothers," Mr. Latimer said.

Public Affairs Officer, Tim Gerhardson who coordinated the program with Acting Country Public Affairs Officer Rudolph Stewart, said the media briefing has helped demystify the visa process.

The Vanguard newspaper, The Guardian, Channels TV, ThisDay, Leadership, African Independent Television, NTA, FRCN, DBN and Voice of America were some of the prominent media houses in attendance.

Chief Consul Latimer took up his assignment in late May, formally succeeding former Chief Consul Ronald Kramer who departed in July 2005. Mr. Latimer is a distinguished veteran of the US Foreign Service. He brings with him an array of experiences in West Africa, where he has previously served in several Francophone and Anglophone posts.



### Interview Appointments

#### How long must I wait?

The US Department of State now publicly posts typical wait times for nonimmigrant visa interviews at US diplomatic/consular posts throughout the world.

As of the middle of July 2006, current typical wait times for interview appointments in Lagos were as follows:

Visa Type	Calendar Days
Visitor	16
Student	16
Exchange Visitor	16
Other Nonimmigrant applicants	16

Readers should bear in mind that 2 business days are required for final processing/printing of visas for successful visa applicants (unless additional administrative processing is required).

Visa applicants may consult current wait times in Lagos (or any other US diplomatic / consular post) by visiting the following US Department of State website:

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors\\_wait\\_result.php?post=Lagos&x=55&y=19](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait_result.php?post=Lagos&x=55&y=19)

### Attention Student Visa Applicants!

June, July and August remain "high season" for student visa applications as Nigerian students gear up to begin US studies in the fall. The Lagos Consular Section, as in past years, will reserve most Non-Immigrant visa interview appointment slots on Wednesdays from **June through August** for student visa applicants. Take advantage of these additional slots—available on our website—to schedule your student visa interviews soon.



### **The Cowrie Creek Chronicle** **(Microwave) Recipes of The Month**

#### **Triple Bean Cake**

16-oz can baked beans  
8-oz can red kidney beans  
1/2 cup canned garbanzo beans, drained  
2 tbsp chili sauce  
2 tbsp cooked bacon pieces

Combine all ingredients in a pyrex or similar oven-proof pan. Cover with a divider tray. Place main dish of choice on top of tray. Cook in microwave on 100% power (high) for 25-30 minutes. Let stand, covered, about 5 minutes. Carefully remove divider tray. Stir mixture before serving. Makes 4 adult servings.

#### **Herbed new potatoes**

1 1/4 lbs whole tiny potatoes (12-14)  
2 tbsp water  
1 tbsp margarine or butter, cut-up  
1 1/2 tsp dried basil or oregano, crushed  
1/4 tsp garlic salt

Cut potatoes into small chunks. Place in a pyrex/oven-proof glass pan. Sprinkle with water, dot with margarine/butter, sprinkle with herb & garlic salt. Cover with divider tray and cook with main dish as per above recipe.

### **Photo of the Month**



Dockside at the US Consulate-General in Lagos

This photo has appeared for several months in the *Cowrie Creek Chronicle*. Before it is retired for good, readers are invited to savor one last glimpse of how the consulate's waterfront formerly looked. As is evident from the construction barriers now in place, changes are underway as construction begins on a new canopied seating area for visa applicants, with shelter from the sun and rain.

### **Consul General lauds start of Lagos-New York nonstop air service**

Excerpts from US Consul-General's remarks at Lagos Murtala Muhammed International Airport on Monday July 17, 2006 for the inaugural flight of North American Airlines new nonstop service between Lagos and New York:

"This is a happy day for Nigeria and the United States, and more importantly for the people of our two countries. We are opening a new and exciting chapter in Nigerian aviation and US-Nigeria relations. This is the beginning of a beginning.

"We are here to celebrate more than the flight of an airplane or even the introduction of an American carrier into the Nigerian skies. We came to celebrate the construction of a new bridge between the United States and Nigeria.

"This bridge will connect two great countries and their two most dynamic and populated cities, New York and Lagos... This bridge has been built because people on both sides want it. No reasonable person spends his time or money to construct a bridge that no one will cross. The construction of a bridge implies a connection that already exists, but also one that needs to be enhanced.

"Even more broadly, this bridge will bring ordinary people from both nations, their cultures, their customs, their dreams and aspirations closer together. More Americans will travel to Nigeria and more Nigerians to America. With this increased travel comes better understanding and a deeper bilateral relationship between the most populous country in Africa and the most populous in the Americas.

"I would like to congratulate North American Airlines, the civil aviation agencies of both nations, and the people of both countries. There is the old saying that "I will cross that bridge when I get to it." Today we amend that saying to become "when we get to that bridge, we shall fly it." May this new bridge continue to welcome and be welcomed by travelers from both nations."

### **The Lagos Consular Section**

The US Consulate General is committed to improving the visa application process and facilitating legitimate travel to the United States. The United States is a free and open society; we want the visa application process to be as transparent as possible. We welcome visitors who genuinely want to visit, study, and do business in the United States. We are dedicated to secure borders, open doors and the safety of US citizens and visitors alike. Changes in visa procedures reflect these concerns and are not intended to hinder legitimate travel.

### ***Cowrie Creek Chronicle (CCC)*** **Submissions**

If you have interesting immigration, visa, naturalization and citizenship stories, please share them with readers. Email submissions to [lagoscons2@state.gov](mailto:lagoscons2@state.gov) attention: CCC. The editors welcome contributions, especially submissions in native Nigerian—or other—languages.

### **Questions**

If you have a question that you need urgently answered, please feel free to email us at [lagoscons2@state.gov](mailto:lagoscons2@state.gov) attention: CCC. We will be more than happy to publish your questions and our responses in *The Cowrie Creek Chronicle* on *The Editor's Page*.

### **Visa Inquiries**

Specific questions about individual visa cases may be directed to the US Consulate General by emailing [lagoscons2@state.gov](mailto:lagoscons2@state.gov). General visa questions may be directed to the US Department of State by emailing [usvisa@state.gov](mailto:usvisa@state.gov). Please indicate the subject of your inquiry on the subject line (e.g., student visa, visitor visa, worker visa, spouse visa, affidavit of support, etc.).